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FOOD POLICY REMAINS SAME

CMs defer decision on prices, bonus

Express News Service

NEW DELHI, Sept. 27

THE conference of Chief Ministers, today endorsed the continuance of the present sugar policy and, by and large, agreed with the recommendation of the Agricultural Prices Commission to procure 4.5 million tons of rice and a million tons of coarse cereals.

Mr. Jagjivan Ram, Minister of Food and Agriculture, indicated to newsmen after the meeting that he had the smoothest sailing in years.

But the conference cold-shouldered the APC suggestion of a scheme of deferred payment to producers so that the money so deferred could be used to build a fund for making credit available.

It appeared that the Chief Ministers shrugged it off as too naive a move to cut ice with the producer.

The meeting ended after an extraordinarily brief session this morning.

Optimism

Mr. Jagivan Ram, who felt that the overall situation in food is good, told the participants that "there is no reason why production should not exceed the 100 million mark". He was happy that the high trend of production had been sustained despite the drought and floods in some parts.

Warning against complacency, Mr. Ram said there were still many imponderables. The weather was the most unpredictable factor. This emphasised the need for buffer stocks.

The Union Minister told newsmen later that the Government had a stock of five million tons of foodgrains of which a million tons was for the pipeline. There was no rice in the buffer stock which, he emphasised at the conference, should include a million tons of rice.

Mr. Jagjivan Ram reminded the Chief Ministers that food imports must cease by 1971. The terms of food aid were in any case getting more and more onerous. The Government's approach was pragmatic and, therefore, it had also made relaxations while keeping a firm grip, on policy already laid down.

The APC had suggested a gradual reduction in the prices of foodgrains which were very high when compared to other countries of the world.

Mr. Jagjivan Ram also stressed this aspect saying that high prices meant difficulties for the farmer who had other needs to think about. Expenditure on food constituted three-fifths of the budget of a common man's budget.

The APC had said that the reduction should be gradual so that the finding of levels could be a painless process. Today the Chief Ministers were mostly of the opinion that the existing prices should continue.

But Mr. Jagjivan Ram told newsmen that this aspect would be discussed between officials of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture and their counterparts in the States later. Minor adjustments were likely to be made in cases where they were called for.

The reduction suggested by the APC ranged from nil to four per cent in the case of rice, upto 5.5 per cent for jowar and bajra and 7.1 per cent in rabi prices for Maharashtra.

Adjustments

In the case of procurement too, Mr. Jagjivan Ram indicated adjustments because there has been floods in some States, including Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar.

The conference decided that the method of procurement would be left to the States some of which bought from the farmer and some others from the millers.

Though Mr. Jagjivan Ram explained that there was no justification for the continuance of the delivery and incentive bonus since the production picture had changed in the last three years, the Chief Ministers urged strongly for their retention.

Some considered them as part of the price. Eventually it was decided to review, revise and, "if necessary discontinue the bonus" though it was incompatible with the thinking about lowering the procurement prices.

Mr. Jagjivan Ram in his briefing told newsmen that there was no question of relaxation of the existing restrictions on movements. He reminded newsmen that wheat practically was one zone which was upper India.

As for sugar, there was no question of total decontrol. It had been proved that the partial deconrol had worked successfully. With the expected increase in production, the availability through the public distribution system and the free market would also increase.

More study

The Union Minister told a newsman that the Chief Ministers' conference was not the forum for discussing the issue of nationalisation of sugar mills. A report had appeared of a move to nationalise sugar mills in UP.

He was of the view that a further study should be made by the State Governments, the Food Corporation and co-operative agencies to explore the possibilities of a reduction in procurement, storage and distribution costs "which are unconscionably high".

Apart from these costs, there was a tendency on the part of the State Governments to increase the sales tax, administrative charges and other imports.

Mr. Jagjivan Ram told the conference that the Union Government had accepted the recommendations of the Ramiah Committee on the subject. Unfortunately, in some States specifications had been adopted which were below the standards prescribed.

'In future for procurement on Central account, the classification and speifications laid down by us will have to be observed," he said firmly.

Obviously having the confusion about production figures in mind (the FAO says 115 million tons against the Union Government's 95 million tons), Jagjivan Ram urged the State Governments to make a special effort to improve agricultural statistics.

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Kamaraj made an offer to Chavan

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Minister and the "syndicate." He said he had not wanted to go to Delhi before the Presidential election, but some "well-meaning friends insisted that if I go to Delhi I may be able to bring about a compromise."

But when he reached there, everybody had taken a stand and he was told that he had come a little too late. Mr Subramaniam suggested to Mr Sanjeeva Reddy that he and Mr Kamaraj should meet the Prime Minister, but his suggestion was brushed aside by Mr Kamaraj.

After the voting in the Presidential election, Mr Subramaniam said, Mr Chavan and he thought they should make another attempt for a compromise before the results were announced, because after the results, matters might get crystallised making a compromise difficult.

Mr Subramaniam said at that time there were rumours that the Prime Minister and her colleagues were about to be suspended from the organisation. "We thought we should avert this crisis."

But unfortunately, Mr Nijalingappa took steps to issue "show cause" notices to the Prime Minister and two of her colleagues even after being cautioned by Mr Chavan that such a step should not be taken. "I am told that Mr Kamaraj was responsible for persuading Mr Nijalingappa to issue these notices, so that everything might be ready for taking action soon after the Presidential election."

Thus, no compromise was possible before Aug. 20 when the election results were announced.

Mr Subramaniam said in the Working Committee meeting Mr Kamaraj and Mr Morarji Desai were the two "hard-liners" insisting on disciplinary action against the Prime Minister and her colleagues or at least a condemnation of their action. But ultimately, the unity resolution was passed without any dissent, Mr Kamaraj also being a party to it. Mr Morarji Deasi later said he had not given his assent to the resolution.

Mr Subramaniam also accused Mr Kamaraj of placing personal interest above national and party interests in supporting Mr Sanjiva Reddy for Presidentship. According to Mr Subramaniam, Mr Kamaraj was also of the view that Mr Reddy was not the best candidate. But he supported him purely on personal considerations.

"My view is that as a national leader, Mr Kamaraj should have pressed for the best candidate," Mr Subramaniam said. When the matter came before the Parliamentary Board during the Bangalore AICC session, Mr Kamaraj should have seen that the decision on the candidate was postponed so that a consensus could be arrived at.

Mr Subramaniam said that Mr Kamaraj prevented a meeting of the Working Committee before the Presidential election, because he and his group were confident of the victory of Mr Reddy. The idea was that after the election, disciplinary action could have been taken against the Prime Minister and she could have been thrown out.

If the Working Committee had met, differences would have been settled and the Prime Minister could not have been blamed later.

However, the Presidential election went against Mr Kamaraj and his group, Mr Subramaniam said.

Mr Subramaniam said he had issued a circular as TNCC president to ensure attendance of MLAs and their voting in favour of Mr Sanjiva Reddy.

Mr Subramaniam blamed Mr Kamaraj for attempting to isolate him from the organisation and set up, wherever possible, Congress workers against him.

He had also inspired some Congress paper to carry on a vicious campaign against the Prime Minister and Mr Subramaniam. Mr Kamaraj had encouraged open criticism on public platforms against the Prime Minister and the TNCC president.

Mr Subramaniam said he had been criticised for not meeting Mr Kamaraj while he was in Delhi during the period of the Presidential election crisis. "I did not meet him knowing his attitude in the crisis and I thought no useful purpose would be served by seeing him."

Another charge, he said, was about arranging the programme for the Prime Minister's visit to Tamil Nadu next month. "Knowing Mr Kamaraj's attitude towards the Prime Minister, I was sure he would have liked not to have this tour at all, and then I would have been accused of organising the tour in spite of his objections."

Mr Subramaniam said it was the Prime Minister who had given the dates for her visit. They had not been suggested by him.

Asked for his reaction Mr Kamaraj said: "I have no comments to make."

Bombay: Mr S. K. Patil, member of the Congress Working Committee, today disclaimed any knowledge about any offer by Mr K. Kamaraj to Union Home Minister Y. B. Chavan of Prime Ministership in case Mr Chavan supported the "Syndicate."

"I would not know unless I met Mr Kamaraj to find out if there is any truth in it," Mr Patil said.

He did not know what this so-called "Syndicate" was and who its members were.

He said the total leadership of the Congress, which was responsible for choosing Mr Lal Bahadur Shastri and Mrs Indira Gandhi, had been dubbed as "Syndicate" by the Communist Press. The same appelation still continued.

Mr Patil said any reference by Mr Subramaniam to the "Syndicate" was a "figment of his imagination."

"If Mr Subramaniam wants to be in the good books of the Prime Minister, he should find other means of doing so and not accuse his colleagues," Mr Patil added.

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Mr Subramaniam

Kamaraj had made an offer

Madras, Sept. 27 (PTI)—Mr C. Subramaniam, who resigned the TNCC presidentship today, told newsmen that Mr K. Kamaraj, MP, had offered to make Mr Y. B. Chavan, the Prime Minister if the latter supported the "Syndicate" to make Mrs Indira Gandhi step down

Mr Subramaniam, who was explaining the role played by Mr Chavan before and after the presidential election, said that the Union Home Minister was accused of changing his attitude only after the result of the presidential poll.

Even before the presidential poll, Mr Chavan had assured him (Kamaraj) that his commitment was only to the extent of supporting Mr Sanjiva Reddy and after that he would not have anything to do with the "Syndicate."

"I must pay a tribute to Mr Chavan that he subordinated his own personal interest and prestige to the party and national interest, in spite of the offer made to make him the Prime Minister by Mr K. Kamaraj

Mr Subramaniam said Mr Chavan and he made many attempts to bring about a rapprochement between the Prime

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Subramaniam quits 'in disgust'

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always be at the disposal of the party.

Mr Subramaniam's resignation is the climax of the rapidly developing rift within the TNCC following the part played by him in the presidential election and the Congress Working Committee meeting later in Delhi.

As the president of the TNCC, he had arranged a tour of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to the State from Friday. He was accused of having done all the arrangements without consulting the TNCC.

Mr K Kamaraj who has planned a mammoth rally on Oct. 5 in Madras in connection with the Gandhi centenary celebration wanted that the Prime Minister should participate in it and address the rally.

According to the tour arranged by Mr Subramaniam, the Prime Minister would not be in the city on that day.

Some district Congress committees and Congress student organisations accused Mr Subramaniam of not consulting the rank and file of the TNCC about the Prime Minister's tour programme and telegraphed to her to postpone the visit.

Congress opposition leader P. G. Karuthiruman also protested against the Prime Minister's tour programme as arranged by Mr Subramaniam and telegraphically requested the Prime Minister that it would be better if she visited Tamil Nadu after Oct. 11, when the TNCC would meet to press for Mr Subramaniam's resignation.

A signature campaign among TNCC members demanding Mr Subramaniam's resignation was also launched. Mr Karuthiruman claimed that a majority of the 394 TNCC members was for Mr Subramaniam's resignation forthwith.

Mr Subramaniam told the news conference that it was not for those who were saying that they would organise a "rousing reception" to the Prime Minister but for him (Mr Subramaniam), to take up all arrangements.

It was for the Prime Minister to decide as to whether she should undertake the tour now or at a later date when there would be a new set up in the TNCC

"Now that I am no longer in the picture, I would appeal to Mr Kamaraj to take an objective view of the situation."

Asked who would take charge of the presidentship, Mr Subramaniam said the vice-president would act till a new president was chosen.

Mr Subramaniam is understood to have informed the Prime Minister about his decision to resign from the TNCC presidentship.

Congress High Command circles in New Delhi have described the developments in the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee leading to the resignation of its president. Mr C. Subramaniam as "unhappy and unfortunate."

Ministers stay away

Madras, Sept. 27 (PTI)—No Tamil Nadu minister was present at the inauguration by President V. V. Giri, of the public sector Madras Refinery at Manali, near here today.

When contacted Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi said the State Government had not been consulted about the arrangements.